

26 AUG 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The September 1967 South Vietnamese Presidential Elections

1. Participation: On 3 September 1967 the people of South Vietnam went to the polls to elect a President and Vice President under the terms of their new constitution. The electoral campaign was free-swinging and lively. There were 11 two-man tickets competing (each ticket being a paired candidacy for the offices of President and Vice-President). Despite systematic and intensive Viet Cong violence, intimidation and harassment mounted in an attempt to block these elections, 4,735,404 South Vietnamese citizens cast valid ballots. This number constituted 83.8 percent of the eligible electorate. Even more interesting and significant, however, is the fact that the 4,735,404 South Vietnamese who voted constituted 57.0 percent of the entire adult population of South Vietnam--a more politically neutral statistic since it is unaffected by any debate over the criteria employed to determine voting eligibility.

2. No even partially reliable census of South Vietnam has been taken since World War II but the best demographic estimates the US Government can make, on the basis of all evidence available, indicate that the adult population of South Vietnam is on the order of 8,311,000--adult being defined as male or female 18 years of age or over.* This is South Vietnam's estimated total mid-1967 adult population, without any reference to political

* This figure includes all Vietnamese and indigenous, resident ethnic minorities: Montagnards, Chams, Cambodians, etc. It does not include visiting foreigners such as Free World Forces, US or other foreign government officials, foreign businessmen, etc. Eighteen is chosen as the defining age for "adult" because 18 is South Vietnam's minimum voting age.

loyalty, persuasion or activity. This total includes all those supporting and fighting for the GVN, all those opposing and fighting against it or supporting the VC/NLF and all those politically in between. 4,735,404 (the total number of valid ballots) is 57.0 (a rounded off 56.97) percent of 8,311,000. Hence something on the order of 57 percent of South Vietnam's entire adult population cast valid ballots in the September 1967 presidential elections.

3. A comparison with recent US experience makes South Vietnam's 57 percent figure even more illuminating. According to figures obtained from the Census Bureau on 23 August 1968, 62.6 percent of the adult population of the United States voted in the 1952 US Presidential election, 60.1 percent in the 1956 Presidential election, 63.4 percent in the 1960 Presidential election and 62.0 percent in the 1964 Presidential election.* In absolute percentage terms, therefore, the difference between South Vietnamese voting in the 1967 South Vietnamese Presidential and American voting in the last four US Presidential elections was as follows: 1952 - 5.6; 1956 - 3.1; 1960 - 6.4; 1964 - 5.0. Thus, even in absolute terms the degree of participation in South Vietnam's Presidential election compares favorably with the degree of American participation in our last four Presidential elections. This absolute comparison made no allowances for the fact that, unlike the US, South Vietnam

*In developing US figures, 21 (the minimum voting age) was taken as the defining characteristic of "adult." This produces a slight skew in the GVN/US comparison but the skew is negligible. There is less distortion in handling the data this way than there would be in using a constant chronological age definition of "adult" (i.e., 18) since the US voting percentage figures would be artificially depressed if the number voting were projected against a population figure including 18-20 year olds who could not vote.

was at war during its presidential election, South Vietnam has no electoral traditions or historical familiarity with electoral institutions, the conduct of South Vietnam's elections was actively opposed by subversion, terrorism and armed force, and the population base against which the number of votes cast was projected to derive the participation percentage figure includes all these actively opposed to and fighting against the whole electoral process itself. If all these factors are taken into account, the degree of Vietnamese participation in the September 1967 election is very impressive.

4. The GVN's Mandate: With 11 slates competing, it is hardly surprising that the outcome was decided on the basis of a plurality rather than one slate's acquisition of an absolute majority of the votes cast. (Indeed, the spread of vote distribution constitutes prima facie evidence of the essential honesty of the balloting and counting procedures.) Ticket 9, headed by Nguyen Van Thieu with Nguyen Cao Ky as his running mate, won the election with 1,649,561 votes or 34.8 percent of the total number of votes cast. Thieu became South Vietnam's President and Ky Vice President. Tran Van Huong, the head of Slate 5, is now Prime Minister, however, and his running mate--leading Buddhist layman Mai Tho Truyen--is now a Minister of State. Thus it is not unreasonable to view the GVN as having an aggregate electoral mandate combining the votes cast for Slate 9 (Thieu/Ky and the 474,100 votes cast for Slate 5 (Huong/Truyen). Slate 5's votes constituted 10.01 percent of the total votes cast.

5. Analyzed in this fashion, the present GVN's aggregate electoral mandate comes to 2,123,661 votes or 44.8 percent of the total number of valid votes cast and 25.5 percent of the total adult population. Once again, some data from recent US experience helps illuminate the significance of these figures. In the 1960 US Presidential election, the winning ticket of President Kennedy and Vice-President Johnson received 34,227,046 votes, a figure which represented 49.7 percent of the total number of votes cast and 31.6 percent of the total adult population of the United States at that time.

In absolute terms, therefore, the percentage point spread between President Kennedy's government's electoral mandate and that of the present GVN is only 4.9 with respect to total valid votes cast and only 6.1 with respect to total adult population. Again, this absolute comparison makes no allowances for Vietnam's special circumstances: war, division, 11 competing slates, and a systematic effort backed by armed force to frustrate and disrupt the whole electoral process.

6. Support for the war: The vigor of South Vietnam's presidential election campaign and the large number of competing candidates masked another significant fact demonstrated by the results of the 1967 elections. As in most elections there was one winner: Ticket 9 (Thieu/Ky). This meant there were ten losing tickets. One of these--Ticket 5 (Huong/Truyen)--has been so folded into the government that its votes contribute to what may legitimately be termed the current GVN's aggregate electoral mandate. Eight of the remaining nine tickets--tickets 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11--were made up of persons active in South Vietnam's political life who were politically opposed to Thieu and Ky and/or Huong and Truyen but are solid in their support of the struggle against the Viet Cong and united in their opposition to Communist rule, though they may have been united on nothing else. These eight tickets, in the aggregate collected 1,794,623 votes, a figure reflecting 38.0 percent of the total number of valid votes cast and 21.6 percent of the total adult population.

7. It is against this backdrop that the 817,120 votes cast for ticket 4--Truong Dinh Dzu and Tran Van Chieu--are properly seen in true perspective. Dzu, the so-called "peace candidate" (almost certainly benefitting from some measure of covert VC support) got 17.3 percent of the total number of valid votes cast, reflecting electoral support from 9.8 percent of the total population. The real significance here, however, is not the votes that Dzu received but the fact that 3,918,284 South Vietnamese voted for candidates resolutely opposed to the Viet Cong and the fact

that their votes comprised 82.7 percent of the total number of votes cast and 47.1 percent of the total adult population of South Vietnam.

ATTACHMENT: Table of Electoral Results

TABLE OF ELECTORAL RESULTS

Presidential Election 1967

<u>Ticket</u>	<u>Number of Votes Won</u>	<u>Percent of Votes Cast</u>	<u>Percent of Adult Population</u>
TICKET 5 (Huong/Truyen)	474,100	10.012	5.704
TICKET 9 (Thieu/Ky)	<u>1,649,561</u>	<u>34.835</u>	<u>19.847</u>
Subtotal:	(2,123,661)	(44.847)	(25.551)
 TICKETS (all but No's 9, 5, and 4) 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11	1,794,623	37.897	21.591
Subtotal:	3,918,284	(82.744)	(47.142)
TICKET 4 (Dzu/Chieu)	<u>817,120</u>	<u>17.256</u>	<u>9.831</u>
GRAND TOTAL:	4,735,404	100.000	56.973

Total Adult Population: 8,311,000 mid-1967 (projected)

Total Votes Cast : 4,735,404